1497

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY.

On Picket Duty.

Comment on the bloody work at Homestead is reserved for next week, for the present noting only the closer union of the brotherhood of thieves against defrauded labor.

In a recent paragraph discussing ways of raising money, I pointed out the advantages of the lottery method over that of compulsory taxation, illustrating by reference to the action of the French government in making lottery-tickets of the tickets of admission to the Paris Exposition. I stated that an immense sum was thus realized for the Exposition, that every one got full value for his money, and that no one was coerced. It is strange that this attack on compulsory taxation should have aroused the ire of Merlino, who is a professed opponent of government, but he steps briskly forward in "Solidarity" to proclaim that these statements of mine are assumptions, and that the facts are that "people were not indeed coerced, but cheated, by a gang of speculators into buying the lottery-tickets, which were not worth half their price, since the ordinary tickets, which it was stated would be sold for twenty-five cents, could practically be got by anybody at less than a third of the price." It is to be noted that Merlino, in spite of his protest, admits, after all, the absence of coercion, which was the chief point that I wished to make. Anarchists would rather have the liberty to buy in a free market, even though they get the worst of the bargain, than to have their money taken out of their pockets by force. Apparently Communists prefer the latter alternative, thus furnishing another proof of their authoritarian disposition. I maintain, however, that in the sale of the Exposition tickets there was neither coercion nor cheating. Merlino gives his version of the facts; I will give mine. Prior to the opening of the Exposition the tickets were offered for sale by the management. They consisted of a lottery-ticket with twenty-five coupons attached, each coupon being a ticket of admission to the Exposition. They were sold at five dollars each, or at the rate of twenty cents per coupon. Every one was at liberty to buy, but the principal purchasers were small shopkeepers and brokers. An immense number were thus sold, — in fact, all that were offered, if my memory serves me. The funds necessary for the Exposition were thereby procured at a stroke. What happened next? The shopkeepers began to detach the coupons and sell them separately as admission-tickets simply, at a slight reduction from the regular twenty-cent price. Then they would sell the lottery-ticket itself either with or without the remaining coupons, and this too at a reduction. But they arranged the reductions so that the combined prices yielded a profit. For instance, a shopkeeper would sell ten single coupons for eighteen cents each; then he would sell the lottery ticket with the fifteen remaining coupons for four dollars. His total receipts from the sale of the whole ticket would thus be five dollars and eighty cents, — a profit of eighty cents. During the early days of the Exposition and as long as the great rush continued, the prices of single coupons ranged not much below the regular fee, but toward the close they fell to a very low figure. Now I ask, who of all those concerned in these transactions was the cheated victim whom Merlino pities? Was the person who purchased a ticket at the original sale cheated? Certainly not, for he obtained admission to the Exposition twenty-five times at a price no greater than he would have had to pay if there had been no lottery scheme, besides a chance of getting a prize in a long series of drawings and a guarantee of the return of his five dollars in full in 1964 to the party holding the ticket at that time. Was the person who bought a cheap admission of a shopkeeper cheated? No; he simply gave up his chance of drawing a prize in order to get admitted to the Exposition for less money? Was the person who bought a lottery ticket of a shopkeeper cheated? By no means, since no pretence was ever made that the price of the lottery ticket, either at the original or any subsequent sale, bore any relation to its value as determined by the law of chance, and since this purchaser too held a ticket which, in any event, would be good for five dollars in 1964. The transaction, when boiled down, is seen to be simply a loan voluntarily made by the ticket-purchasers to the managers of the Exposition, this loan carrying a chance in a lottery in lieu of drawing interest, and repayment of the principal being guaranteed in seventy-five years. Clearly there is no fraud here, unless it be claimed that it is fraudulent to deprive the ticket-buyer of interest on his five dollars for seventy-five years. As all Socialists must consider interest itself a fraud, Merlino will hardly advance this claim. I ask the reader's pardon for devoting so much space to the subject. My motive was to give a sample of Communistic recklessness of statement, and to show how completely the propositions of Communists collapse when subjected to searching analysis.

Up to the time of its removal to New York, Liberty was wont to pride itself upon its typographical accuracy. Except in three or four instances, it had never given its contributors cause for complaint at the manner in which their articles were presented to the reader. It had its own printing-office, and the work was done properly. But in New York necessity has compelled the intrusting of the printing to an outside establishment, and, though the office was not an inferior one, the "intelligent compositor" has made the most of his opportunity. Into every issue of the paper most annoying errors have crept, even when the manuscript was of the plainest. The last number was so especially offensive in this respect that I take occasion to make the necessary corrections. In the first column of Mr. Perkins's article on "Political Duty" the phrase "express opinions with dogmatism" should read "express opinions without dogmatism"; in the third column, "so long as greed resists opportunities" should read "so long as greed restricts opportunities," and "in some quarter" should read "in some quarters." Also the reader should substitute, in the last column of Miriam Daniell's review of "The Gothic Minster," "very obviously the American position" for "very obvious by the American position," and "they emit the noisome and pestilential odors" for "they emit the nuisance and pestiiential odors"; and, in the same writer's poem, "Toleration," the word "spirit" should take the place of "spiritual." Of these six errors one is wholly and one partly attributable to the manuscript; for the others the blame belongs solely to the compositor and proof-reader. Fortunately Liberty is able to assure its contributors that such blunders in future will be as rare as they used to be. Through the kindness of comrades, some giving their time and others lending their money, the paper once more enjoys its own type and dons its new dress with the present number, which is late on that account. With the type set by truly intelligent compositors and the proofs "read by copy" by the editor, there seems no reason to doubt that Liberty hereafter will be as accurate in typography as in thought, and consequently, to readers and contributors alike, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel." — PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

The Mistakes of Merlino.

The ink was hardly dry on my paragraph in the last number of Liberty announcing that Merlino had failed to send his promised letter of criticism when the letter arrived. Unfortunately, when I was on the point of giving his manuscript to the printer, a copy of his new journal reached me, containing in advance of Liberty the very letter which he had sent to Liberty for publication. This gross breach of journalistic etiquette debars Merlino from the courtesy of these columns, and I now treat his article as I would treat any criticism of ordinary importance appearing in the columns of another periodical, — that is, I give the gist of it in my own words and make brief comment.

At the start he makes the mistake of attacking Individualist Anarchism in the name of Socialist Anarchism, coolly assuming to confine Socialism to Collectivism and Communism and thus to exclude Individualism from Socialism. Now I am no more willing to be defined out of the Socialistic ranks by Merlino than to be defined out of them *in company with Merlino* by Karl Marx and Francis A. Walker. Marx and Walker confine Socialism to State Collectivism. This rules out Merlino (if we admit that he is an Anarchist, as he claims), and naturally he doesn't like it. So he insists on an extension of Socialism to cover Anarchist-Communism. But this rules me out, and I too rebel. Liberty has always insisted that Individualism and Socialism are not antithetical terms; that, on the contrary, the most perfect Socialism is possible only on condition of the most perfect Individualism; and that Socialism includes, not only Collectivism and Communism, but also that school of Individualist Anarchism which conceives liberty as a means of destroying usury and the exploitation of labor. Here is Liberty's definition of Socialism, as often stated in its pages, and I have yet to see a better one:

"Socialism is the belief that the next important step in progress is a change in man's *environment* of an *economic* character that shall include the abolition of every privilege whereby the holder of wealth acquires an *anti-social* power to compel tribute."

By this definition, which I challenge Merlino to overthrow, I am as good a Socialist as he, and therefore any discussion between us must be, not of Socialist Anarchism against Individualist Anarchism, but of Communist Socialism against Individualist Socialism. For my own part, I should describe it as a discussion of Authoritarianism against Anarchism; but this would beg one of the questions at issue, — namely, whether Merlino is an Authoritarian.

Upon the heels of Merlino's first mistake follows a second. He erroneously supposes that I agree with him in "conceiving the future society as composed of groups of workingmen in actual possession of the requisite means of production." I do not profess to know what the form of the new society will be. I am not at all sure that in *form* any new society is needed. In fact, I am strongly inclined to believe that, as far as industrial form is concerned, society is very well as it is. Possibly a new and better form may sometime be discovered and realized. But whether this be so or not, the present form of society is perfectly compatible with the realization of Socialism, and our task is not to construct new social channels, but to clear out the old ones, remove the rubbish, give free flow to all activities, and destroy the barriers whereby the results of activity concentrate rather than disperse.

But even were we to construct new channels, economic law would remain the same. The value of the new channels would depend entirely upon their freedom from all obstructions. So, for the sake of argument, I will admit that the future society will be carried on by industrial groups in possession of the means of production. Merlino now inquires whether the relations between these groups should be based on free competition or organized solidarity, and he answers: On organized solidarity, not on free competition. I answer: On free competition in any case, *and* on organized solidarity so far as the groups *choose* to solidarily organize.

In support of his answer Merlino claims that free competition would lead to the enrichment of the few and the pauperization of the many, but he fails to prove this claim by a single fact or argument. He does indeed offer as proof several illustrations, but these are utterly valueless, since each one of them is specifically characterized by the absence of competition. Merlino's reasoning may be summarized thus:

Major. In certain cases (one in a million) competition is impossible.

Minor. In these cases a few get rich at the expense of the many.

Conclusion. Competition enriches the few at the expense of the many.

Of course it requires but a small development of the logical faculty to see that the real inference from the premises is that monopoly enriches the few at the expense of the many, and that competition, wherever it is allowed to come in play, prevents such enrichment. Now, wherever competition is not restricted by law, it is sure to come in play with this beneficent effect, except in the one case in a million which Merlino supposes. Are we, then, to deny ourselves the advantages of this great economic law simply because now and then a Patti has a voice which the populace consider beyond competition or some equally lucky individual or group obtains control of a particularly valuable iron mine? Certainly not, unless we wish to sacrifice great things for small.

The contention of Individualist Socialism is that competition, when left free, is possible throughout nearly the whole of industry and commerce, and that, wherever thus possible, it abolishes usury and secures labor in the ownership of its entire product. Let Merlino bring forward some instances where free competition fails to do this, and I will consider them. But I am not called upon to consider the results of monopoly, when these are offered as an argument against competition.

Nevertheless I may properly call attention to the fact that it is the tendency of science, civilization, and social progress to further narrow the very limited sphere within which natural monopoly makes competition impossible. When the destruction of artificial monopoly shall have improved the condition of the workers, affording them leisure and other means of cultivation and education, no Patti will be able to hold a monopoly of song or to command an extravagant price for an evening's entertainment in the face of the ability and willingness of others to furnish it for less. And if, as Nikola Tesla tells us, we are soon to get motive power out of the earth beneath our feet at next to no cost at all, what care we for the water-power of Niagara? Let the group monopolize it which will.

But, Merlino tells us, competition involves labor! If a man builds a bridge and charges high tolls for the privilege of using it, it is immaterial to Merlino that those who object to the price are free to build another, for to build another would require labor and time. It is so much easier, you know, to seize the results of another's labor than to perform labor ourselves. Quite true, and I am unable to answer this characteristically Communistic argument except by the (slightly altered) Scriptural injunction: "If a man will not work, neither shall he cross a bridge."

In conclusion, a word upon the political aspect of the question. Be competition a blessing or an evil, I am curious to know how Merlino can forbid it and still call himself an Anarchist. No group, he says, shall be allowed to exchange on the competitive principle or to buy labor. What does this mean? It means that, if Group A makes hats and exchanges them with Group B for a certain number of coats, Group C shall not be allowed to make hats and offer them to Group B for a smaller number of coats, and that, if Group C insists on doing so, Group C shall be forthwith demolished. What is that but Archism? Any social system which in the name of Anarchism suppresses the liberty to produce and to exchange is not only a tyranny, but an hypocrisy, a humbug, a sham. T.

Political Duty: A Confession of Skepticism.

[Continued from No. 228.]

1. "The State certainly has a right to regulate the conduct of its citizens for the common good."

As thus stated, the proposition secures general assent. It is, however, in effect (however sincerely it may be brought forward), not a reason, but an evasion. It would seem strangely incongruous, in a country where all men's rights are supposed to be equal, to say that any officials, however much respected, have rights of control, and it is probable that the word "State" owes much of its popularity to an ill-defined perception of this incongruity. For the great, imper-

sonal, theoretically-beneficent State to possess rights superior to those of the individual does not seem unfair or dangerous, and this doubtless accounts largely for the use of the word. It requires, however, only a little keenness of perception to see that the question is simply begged in this form of answer; for the question, "what is the State, and where did it get its rights?" at once suggests itself.

To this question a variety of answers may be given. It may be said, for example, that the State is a divine institution, and that God has delegated to it its rights. It seems a little hard to be asked to discuss this theory seriously, at this late day; yet they who hold it are in earnest, and should be fairly met. So, risking the lofty scorn of the unreconstructed cleric for presuming to criticise a Bible doctrine, as well as the mild contempt of those who have long since dismissed from their minds the extravagant claims of the Christian doctrinaires, I venture to point out some of the implications which this theory brings with it. Whatever be the proof-texts relied upon; whether it is held, with Peter, that men should "submit themselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers"; or, again, that we should "honor the king" (by disregarding which precept our ancestors honored themselves); or whether it be said, with Paul, that "the powers that be are ordained of God," — the application of the text is the same, to wit: that Government belongs of right to God; that our rulers, by virtue of their official positions, and when acting conformably to existing laws, hold a kind of power of attorney from the Almighty, and that, therefore, governmental restrictions, as virtually a part of God's law, are binding on all human consciences. This doctrine is seldom circumstantially taught or explained in public (which seems fortunate for the feelings of its supporters), but is often taught as a general principle in places and on occasions which secure for it a sort of semi-publicity, and hints and fragments of it are to be found in very many speeches and writings.

It is charitable to suppose that they who hold this doctrine are not over-familiar with the details of the art of law-making as practiced in our cities and at the seats of State and National governments. Few of them, it may be safely presumed, have been used to sit up o' nights with city council committees, lobbyists, or caucus manipulators. They have probably not been favored, as a rule, with the intimacy of those paired legislators who, as old Butler has it,

> may be said
> To lie in Honor's *truckle* bed,

and would, perhaps, be surprised to learn that laws are often made to satisfy private greed, to "deliver the goods" promised in ante-election bargains, and sometimes for the mere convenience of officials. Few experiences are wholly useless, and if the people who so confidingly (and confoundingly) associate the all-wise decrees of their venerable deity on equal terms with those of the modern law-brokers could breathe for awhile the air of congressional, legislative, or aldermanic halls, they might learn to sort their ideas with more care. Some of them, I fear, would be tempted to say of the legislative world what Lord Howe, in Mrs. Browning's poem, says of the world in general:

> They say God made it once, but if He did,
> 'Twas so long since, and since we have spoiled it so,
> He scarce would know it, if He looked this way,
> From hells we preach of, with the flames blown out.

They who hold the doctrine in question must, when they come to think deeply upon it, arrive at a curious dilemma. On the one hand is the undeniable fact that laws, both general and special, bearing upon large numbers of people, are very often the expression of the greed, rapacity, and lust for power of the ruling classes. On the other hand is the theory (equally dear to these disciples with the fact) that God's laws are all wise and good. Now, while Christians do teach, as a part of their system, that God can and does use the wickedness of the wicked for good ends, it is not argued anywhere, I believe, that he sanctions their evil deeds. How, then, can the fact and the theory be reconciled? for reconciled they must be, if people who have good wits and use them are to be drawn and held to this dogma. Moreover, there are the inevitable questions of detail, which must ever test the knowledge of those who pretend to understand the divine government, and which must be answered, if their teachings on this point are to be of practical use to the consciences of living men, — in this case, such as these:

How many people, or how many square miles of land, are needful to constitute a State whose decrees shall be binding on the conscience? Will they be binding "where two or three are gathered together"? or is a greater number required? And is any number too great?

Can a State exist within a State? If so, then in the very common case of a conflict of laws, which State, the greater or the less, will usually receive the divine sanction?

In case of secession, does God's approval go with the party of the more humane and progressive ideas, or with the party which conducts itself in the more legal and constitutional manner?

In case of war between two States, are we to infer that one of them has forfeited the divine sanction? and if so, how can that fact be determined in advance? Or are God's elect fighting each other?

Is the saying of Napoleon that Providence is on the side of the heaviest battalions a true one? If not, then can a State which owes its origin and continuance to force and bloodshed claim the divine sanction for its laws?

Are there two kinds of States, — a kind whose laws are binding on the conscience and a kind whose laws may be blamelessly disobeyed? And if so, how can they be distinguished?

Again: can it be possible that His ancient and indefatigable Majesty the Devil, who (according to the Christians) is ever seeking opportunities for evil, refrains from meddling with the making and executing of laws? The theory of divine delegation of authority to the officials seems to point that way, yet many people, I am sure, will receive the suggestion with the greatest incredulity. But if he does not refrain; if, on the contrary (as many people think), he is much given to pernicious activity in politics, then it will have to be admitted — will it not? — that some, at least, of the powers that be are ordained of the Devil? Whence it follows that, instead of submitting ourselves unto every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake, we ought to oppose ourselves unto some of the ordinances of men for the Devil's sake, — this implying, of course, a choice between God's laws and the Devil's; and where is the Pope who shall tell us which is which?

But the thing becomes too absurd. The theory of divine delegation is not suited to the times. It agreed excellently well with the old idea of local or neighborhood gods, but its application to a first-class cosmopolitan or universal God tends to make him ridiculous in men's eyes. I pass to another theory of the State — the popular one — very ill-defined, and consistent neither with itself nor with the facts, yet answering the purpose of many a man highly respected for political wisdom. The State, as thus viewed, is supposed to be a kind of person,* having rightful authority over all people within certain territorial boundaries, which authority is said to be derived from the people. It is supposed to have "honor," "sovereignty," and "majesty," as if it were a king. Willing acknowledgment and support of it is called "patriotism," and is reckoned a virtue, which virtue reaches its intensest expression in the famous phrase, "Our country, right or wrong," and is apt to become relaxed by the broadening of view and sympathy which comes to a man or woman from intercourse with foreigners and extended knowledge of the wonderfully various phases of human life. Fundamental dissent from its rules and disobedience of them is called "treason," and is supposed to be more or less culpable, according to the depth of prejudice of him who sits in judgment. The State is also popularly supposed to be rightfully in possession of all the privileges claimed for it by existing constitutions, statutes, ordinances, and judicial decisions, which privileges, it is assumed, may be rightfully increased or diminished at the next sessions of Congress, the Legislatures, the Supreme Courts, the Boards of Aldermen or Selectmen, provided that in so doing the customs and injunctions of generations dead and gone are strictly observed.

While possessing all the above attributes and powers, the State, in America, is also supposed to be the embodiment of certain principles expressed in well-known popular formulas. It is supposed, for example, to be a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," and to derive its just powers (all the powers claimed by the statute-books and judges are assumed to be just) from the "consent of the governed," — a phrase that will be dissected later. While it is often conceded, in a deprecating way, that its rules and practice are "not perfect, of course," it is worthy of note that *no corresponding imperfection in the obligation to obey it is admitted for a moment;* on the contrary, to attempt to oppose its authority openly, or to evade it by any means save those bearing its own sanction, is held to be wholly wrong and deserving of violence.

It needs but little logic to show the absurdity and inconsistency of this popular conception. After what has been said in describing it, and considering what will be said later, it must suffice to point out here that, according to it, the very same action is, in many cases, right in one locality and wrong in another; that its pretended derivation of power from the people is a transparent humbug, its real basis being the customs of present and past generations (which are stu-

* "The State and country are *moral beings*, with a will, a conscience, a history, a responsibility." — *Senator Hoar, of Mass.*

pidly assumed to be binding upon us because accepted or endured by our fathers) and the conventionally-expressed opinions of a small proportion (much less than half) of the adult population, largely manipulated by its political leaders. Moreover, one may not reasonably expect the popular idea of the State to be logical and consistent. Since most people carry their logic but little farther than their own every-day affairs, popular ideas concerning any large question are apt to be illogical; and besides, the institution called Government is one of the most illogical and inconsistent of all phenomena, being, to a great degree, the product of superstition, caprice, arbitrary tyranny, and political bargaining, extending through many generations. I must, therefore, reject both the ecclesiastical and the popular conceptions of the State, — the former because it rests wholly upon the doubtful foundation of tradition, and is incidentally absurd, and the latter because it is crude and inconsistent, — qualities which are far more damaging to theories than to men.

What, then, shall we do with the word? Two ways of dealing with it suggest themselves: either to use it in a definite and comprehensible sense, or to abandon it as one of those "impostor-terms" containing unwarranted assumptions and tending but to befog argument. Taking up the first course, I submit the following definition, trusting that it will be found at least reasonably clear and consistent with the facts:

STATE: a corporation, whose members are;

(*a*) The officers (legislative, judicial, and executive) in any particular political combination, such as an empire, kingdom, or republic, or any political subdivision of the same; for example, of the Russian Empire, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Republic of France, or of the United States of America, or, to take smaller divisions, — similar, however, in character, — the State of Massachusetts, the Department of the Seine, the City of Vienna, or the Town of Concord.

(*b*) All persons who willingly and usually uphold the said officers, by word and deed, in the discharge of their respective functions. This second class includes, roughly speaking, all persons within the specified boundaries who are not included in class (*a*), with the following noteworthy exceptions:

1. Most persons under eighteen years.

2. Persons much isolated from their fellows, either by residence, or by political apathy, or both. Such persons are sometimes consciously related to simple local "States," while almost unconscious of larger ones, until driven by administrative tyranny to recognize them as enemies.*

3. Persons who recognize government officials as the agents of a political combination more or less hostile to their interests, and submit to their objectionable rules as little as possible, and for prudential reasons only.

T. P. PERKINS.

[To be continued.]

Numbers.

The crowd is always on the side of truth;
But commonly not long before the truth
Has in that special form become a lie.

Harry Lyman Koopman.

* As in the Tennessee mountains, where the lives and goods of the inhabitants are endangered, and sometimes taken, by United States officers, in the sacred name of Revenue.

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